

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Jason Reynolds, Author



Be not afraid of discomfort. If you can't put yourself in a situation where you are uncomfortable, then you will never grow. You will never change. You'll never learn.

1 Jason Reynolds is not afraid of the truth. He writes, "Here's what I know: I know there are a lot — A LOT — of young people who hate reading. I know that many of these book haters are boys. I know that many of these book-hating boys don't actually hate books, they hate boredom."¹ Knowing this fact, Reynolds is on a mission to write exciting books for teens...and his mission is succeeding.

2 Jason Reynolds was born on December 6, 1963 in Washington, D.C. He grew up in nearby Oxen Hill, Maryland. When he was just nine years old, Jason started writing poetry. Listening to Queen Latifah's rap music inspired him to write his own poems. Jason loved reading and writing poetry.

3 What he didn't like was reading books. The books that he was given in school did not reflect his life or neighborhood, so he did not connect with them. He was 17 years old when he read a book from beginning to end. It was *Black Boy* by Richard Wright who was a black author. Jason connected with the main character in the story and this inspired him to read more.

4 Jason went to the University of Maryland and graduated with a degree in English. He then moved to New York City and dreamed of writing books for teens. His first book was published in 2009, but it did not sell many copies. Life was not going well for Jason and he had to live in his car for a while. He thought about giving up his dream of being a writer. He moved back to Washington, D.C. and worked for his father at a mental clinic. But a friend, Chris Meyers, encouraged him to keep his dream alive. Meyers encouraged Reynolds to write in his own voice and to tell stories about "the neighborhood kids, the black and brown kids who need to know that they exist, that they are special and valuable."²

5 So Jason went back to writing. He wrote about his neighborhood and his experiences. He worked as a retail manager to earn money and wrote in his spare time. Finally, in 2014, Jason's second book was published. *When I Was The Greatest*, was a success. Since 2014, Reynolds has written and published thirteen more books.

6 He is a *New York Times* Bestseller and has won many awards for his books. The book *Ghost* was a National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature. He was also named the National Ambassador For Young People's Literature in 2020. As the Ambassador, Jason works to raise awareness about the importance of literature for young people and how it relates to education and literacy.

7 Besides writing books for young people, Jason Reynolds is also a writing teacher at Lesley University. He visits schools and juvenile detention centers and gives presentations. He wants to inspire teens to chase after their dreams just like he did. He hopes that sharing his story of growing up and facing obstacles will encourage them.

¹ Reynold, Jason. "Here's What I Plan To Do: Not Write Boring Books", retrieved from <https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/about> on 7.2.20.

² Krug, Nora. "How a kid who didn't read a book until he was 17 grew up to be a literary star", *The Washington Post*, October 23, 2017. Retrieved from [Article Link](#) on 7.2.20.

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1. How are rap music and poetry similar to each other? How are they different?

2. What details in the passage support the fact that teens are important to Jason Reynolds?

3. How does paragraph 1 connect with paragraph 3?

4. What might have happened if Jason Reynolds hadn't taken Chris Meyers advice?
